

National Heritage Science Forum: Achievements 2015-2016

The National Heritage Science Forum (NHSF) brings together the leading organisations that create and use heritage science research. Members work together to build the community of heritage science in the UK and demonstrate its public benefit.

The Forum achieves this by:

- Strengthening the infrastructure to support future research
- Widening the scope of partnerships with other fields of research
- Opening up heritage science research so that more people engage with and contribute to the research agenda

The past membership year (May 2015-April 2016) has seen many positive changes for the Forum including new members, a clear focus on three priority areas of action (resource-sharing, partnerships & networks, and policy), research into remaining gaps in the National Heritage Science Strategy and the recruitment of a new Chairman to the Board of Trustees.

Members

The membership is at the heart of the Forum, which acts as a vehicle for sharing knowledge and ideas, and taking collective action to influence policy makers and opinion formers. Over the course of the last year, NHSF welcomed Cambridge University Museums & Botanic Garden, the Wellcome Library, English Heritage and Historic England to the Forum, bringing the total number of members to 20.

Priority areas

During 2015-2016 the Forum focused on its three priority areas of resource-sharing, partnerships and networks, and policy. Members have contributed their knowledge and resources to the three associated working groups and, by working together, have achieved the following on behalf of the heritage science community.

1. Resource sharing

NHSF's online tool (Kit-Catalogue) to facilitate the sharing of equipment (and knowledge about equipment) between organisations continues to grow, with an increasing number of member organisations contributing information about the equipment they use for heritage science research. We've produced a handbook to help individual organisations add their equipment and many have nominated Kit-Catalogue 'Champions' as a dedicated point of contact within their organisation. The Kit-Catalogue is now complemented by a 'project highlight' template through which organisations can add information about projects they have undertaken that demonstrate the use of equipment or facilities they have listed in the catalogue.

The resource-sharing working group continues to work on the development of a template agreement that will help to make it easier for organisations to share equipment.

The group is also looking at the issue of Open Access to research and the role that NHSF might play to support open access to heritage science research.

Members of the Forum share their current research activities and future plans at Board meetings as a means of supporting potential collaboration between organisations.

2. Partnerships and networks

NHSF has developed a framework for engagement that covers online and in-person activities.

In the past year activities have included: presentation at an English Heritage/National Trust/Historic Royal Palaces research seminar, presentation to Icon Heritage Science Group, December NHSF Members & Friends event, British Science Week 'This is Heritage Science' blog, attendance at the STEM Forum for Public Engagement reception.

Forthcoming activities include: May 'spotlight on SEAHA blog, Icon 2016 conference, SEAHA conference, September NHSF Members & Friends event, November Members & Friends event.

In 2015 research was commissioned to map completed research published on the Research Gateway to the National Heritage Science Strategy. The subsequent report, "Filling the Gaps" is being assessed for the potential to 'crowd source' the activity, opening up the project to the heritage science community so that a wide range of published and unpublished research can be included. It is intended that the project will inform the partnerships and networks that NHSF seeks to develop in the future and help the heritage science community to identify opportunities for future research.

The BSI Committee B/560 Conservation of tangible cultural heritage has formed a link with NHSF so that the Forum will be routinely consulted on draft standards. NHSF has contributed to consultations on *Guidelines for improving energy performance of historic buildings* and *New sites and buildings intended for the storage of collections*.

3. Policy

The Policy working group has identified a number of priority committees and government departments that it will monitor for opportunities for engagement.

Over the past year, NHSF has contributed to the consultation on the Historic Environment (Wales) Bill, Historic Environment Scotland's first corporate plan, ranked priorities for future European funding (contribution to AHRC), responded to the DCMS consultation 'Cultural Protection Fund' and the Horizon 2020 consultation on SC5 'Climate action, environment, resource efficiency and raw materials', as well as issuing statements following the autumn spending review and the spring budget.

NHSF has written to Jo Johnson, Minister of State for Universities & Science to highlight the importance of investment in heritage science infrastructure to build on the availability of shared resources, and has received a reply.

NHSF recruited a new Chairman, Alastair McCapra, who took up the role at the trustee meeting on 16 December, succeeding Co-Chairs Nancy Bell and Professor May Cassar whose significant contribution over 2015-2016 is greatly appreciated. Alastair gave the keynote address at NHSF's 'Members & Friends' event on the theme 'Cash for data?' The address explored potential tensions between the academic drive for open data, the institutional need for income generation from its assets and the ethics of the sale of data generated from public funding. The text of his talk is available at:

<http://www.heritagescienceforum.org.uk/publications-page.php>. The theme of access to research publications and data, and the impact that NHSF can make for the heritage science community, is one of the areas that is being taken forward in 2016-2017.

For further information please contact Caroline Peach, administrator@heritagescienceforum.org.uk

NHSF members:

Amgueddfa Cymru National Museum Wales, Birmingham Museums Trust, British Library, British Museum, Cardiff University, English Heritage Trust, Historic England, Historic Royal Palaces, Historic Environment Scotland, Icon, National Galleries of Scotland, National Trust, Natural History Museum, Royal Armouries, Tate, The National Archives, UCL, University of Cambridge, University of Oxford, Wellcome Library.